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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 HILLAH 000133

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [MARR](#) [EAID](#)
SUBJECT: GOVERNOR DISCUSSES KARBALA APPROACHING PIC AND ANBAR TALKS;
PRT/USACE MEETING ON PROJECT MODALITIES

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CLASSIFIED BY: Angus T. Simmons, PRT Leader for Najaf, Karbala,
and Diwaniyah, REO Hillah, Department of State .
REASON: 1.4 (a), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: PRTOffs traveled to Karbala on October 1 to meet with Governor Aqeel, Karbala Provincial Council (PC) Chair Al'al-Yasiry, and the PC Reconstruction Committee. Governor Aqeel noted that the Prime Minister has now confirmed that Karbala will become a Province under Iraqi control (PIC) on October 29, and he said that he was ready to travel to Ramadi after Ramadan for the next round of Anbar-Karbala Governor meetings. End Summary.

Karbala PIC Set for October 29

¶2. (C) Governor Aqeel, with PC Chair Al'al-Yasiry sitting in, noted that the Prime Minister had just signed off on a letter the day before settling on October 29 as the day that Karbala would become a PIC. The Governor made a point of expressing his thanks for the results of BG Cardon's meeting with him in Husaniyah the previous week. He enthusiastically expressed appreciation for help offered with T-walls, EOD equipment, checkpoints, and a new detention center. He also repeated a request for training classes for 6,000 police. Governor Aqeel readily agreed to meet with 3ID/PRT representatives o/a October 15 to plan for the PIC ceremony and to discuss any issues relevant to the post-PIC environment.

Karbala's Security Team Hostile to Outsiders

¶3. (S) The Governor expressed concerns about the newly appointed Karbala Operations Center commander LTG Kassim Naval. Nazal replaced General Saleh after the latter was relieved for poor performance during the Shabaniyah unrest in August. Aqeel worried that 8th Iraqi Division soldiers stationed in Karbala would not respond well to orders from Nazal since the general is from the 9th Iraqi Division. The Governor also expressed concern that General Kassim would be supported by three Iraqi battalions who are coming straight out of the draft with no experience and limited training and noted that Karbala had received much more support from MOD than MOI for their security needs. He has made the Prime Minister had promised to look into these concerns once he had returned from the UNGA. [Comment: Though some of this sounds plausible, there may be more to these comments than meets the eye. The Province has delayed announcing LTG Kassim's appointment and he will have to overcome local suspicion of outsiders to remain in the job and be effective. End Comment.]

Federal versus Provincial Iraqi Control

14. (C). There are questions about whether the central government is turning over responsibility for Karbala to the provincial government or if in fact the central government is retaining responsibility for security. One indication of this could be the presence of an operations center staffed by the central government. The operations center enjoys a direct link to the Prime Minister that circumvents the governor's office.

Anbar-Karbala Governor's Talks

15. (S) The Governor expressed his readiness to travel to Ramadi to meet with Anbar Governor Ma'anoun during the first week after Ramadan. [Comment: This could still come undone, but the symbolism of a Shi'a Governor traveling to a Sunni province for the second round of reconciliation talks could be very positive. End comment.]

16. (SBU) PRTOffs and USACE representatives met with the Provincial Council Construction Committee Directors General giving both sides a chance to clear the air on contracting procedures, ways of giving Provincial authorities more of a role in determining specifications during the design phase of projects, listening to provincial experience with companies that had performed poorly in the past, the need for a clean process of handing over projects for acceptance and access to projects underway, and regular meetings/communication to iron out issues. The Karbala side clearly found the discussion useful and requested the PRT/USACE delegation to return to Karbala for a second round of these discussions. [Comment: Though both sides had serious issues to discuss, the tone of the meeting was positive and businesslike. End Comment.]

17. (C) Comment: This was the third visit of PRTOffs to the Governorate Compound, and the atmosphere is clearly becoming better and more relaxed as we visit. PC Chairman Al'al-Yasiry made a point of presenting Team Leader with a copy of the Karbala newspaper showing the front-page coverage of the PRT's previous visit to the Governorate Compound. This was the first

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time that a visit by PRTOffs was covered in the Karbala media in recent memory (more than eighteen months). Al'al-Yasiry accompanied PRTOFFs on the helo ride to the Provincial Joint Communication Center in order to enable him attend the October 1 meeting. As we circled, flying into the Provincial Joint Communication Center, the Chairman, clearly enjoying himself, took the opportunity to snap quite a number of shots of Karbala's two famous shrines from the air.
SCOTT